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PRESENTS

La Traviata

(Verdi)

AT THE

*City Theatre
Limerick*

November 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 1962

Souvenir Programme

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(PUCCINI)

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(VERDI)

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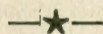
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THE CLIMB

In 1957 the Limerick Choral Society presented "The Vagabond King" at the City Theatre. This most difficult show had been the downfall of many other Societies, but the Society met the challenge and success was achieved by enthusiasm and hard work akin to slavery.

However, Musical Comedy was but the penultimate objective of the small group guiding the destinies of the young Society. The magic of Grand Opera beckoned them irresistibly onwards. They decided to face the mammoth task of bringing this great medium of culture back to Limerick on a regular basis. The wonderful melodies of Verdi, Puccini, Donizetti, etc., would again thrill Limerick audiences and young Limerick singers would work with and learn from first class guest artistes. The method of gradual approach was adopted.

In the Spring of 1958, the Society staged Balfe's "The Bohemian Girl" at St. John's Pavilion and introduced the magnificent talents of Thomas Round to local audiences. The show was a striking success. The climb to the heights had started.

In the Autumn of the same year the Society returned to the City Theatre with Wallace's evergreen "Maritana." Grand tenor and great trouper, Gerald Davies, appeared as Don Caesar. Crowded houses received the Opera with remarkable enthusiasm.

Strauss's "The Gipsy Baron" was the Society's next choice. Josephine Scanlon and Austin Gaffney headed an excellent cast, and another great success was achieved.

The Society's mentors now felt ready to go into the realms of Grand Opera. It was decided to present a season of Grand Opera each Autumn and a lighter type of show each Spring.

Verdi's "La Traviata" and Benedict's "Lily of Killarney" were staged at the City Theatre in November, 1959. Commdt. John Brennock, Assistant Director of the Army School of Music, was engaged to conduct the Operas. The success of the season is now musical history. The guests in the "Lily of Killarney" were Veronica Dunne, John Studdart, and that great baritone, William Dickie, who took Limerick by storm. The guests in "La Traviata" were Josephine Scanlon and Gerald Davies. The Society had kept faith with the music-loving people of Limerick.

In the Spring of 1960 a sparkling presentation of "The Student Prince," with guest artiste John Carolan, further enhanced the reputation of the Society.

Another great season of Grand Opera brightened November of the same year. "Lucia di Lammermoor," with Edvina Gray, John Carolan and Ronnie Evans, and "Il Trovatore," with Josephine Scanlon, Sylvia Rowlands, Brychan Powell and Fred Westcott, were presented to packed houses. James J. Henry was the excellent producer. John Carolan was indisposed on the opening night of "Lucia" and with kind permission of the Directors of Covent Garden, the services of the well known tenor, Kenneth McDonald, were secured. Ken flew over on the day of the performance and flew back immediately afterwards.

Kitty Prince's splendid production of "The Land of Smiles," with guest artistes Verushka Geinishvili and Rolf Gramatke, graced the stage of the City Theatre in the Spring of 1961.

And so to November, 1961. "Rigoletto," with guests Lucille Graham, Robert Thomas and William Dickie, and "Faust," with Edvina Gray, Rowland Jones and Stanislav Pieczora, thrilled packed houses for eight wonderful nights.

The Society put on "The Bohemian Girl" again in May, 1962, and the singing of Elizabeth Rust and Edward Byles highlighted an eventful week. The conductor was Capt. R. B. Kealy.

The Limerick Choral and Operatic Society, with courage and confidence, now presents a two weeks festival of Grand Opera. The choice of "La Boheme," "La Traviata" and "The Barber of Seville" for the Season created excited anticipation among opera lovers from far and wide. These wonderful operas, with nine international guest artistes, a guest producer, two guest conductors, and a twenty-three piece professional orchestra, are presented by the Society with much pride. The aims and hopes of the Limerick Choral Society have been realised. A dream has come true.

Some grand people helped to make the dream come true, not the least of whom was the late Rev. Br. Kealy, the Society's first President. Br. Kealy was a wonderful man. He was the Society's great friend in the hour of need. His memory will be cherished by the Society with pride and affection. May his noble soul rest in peace.

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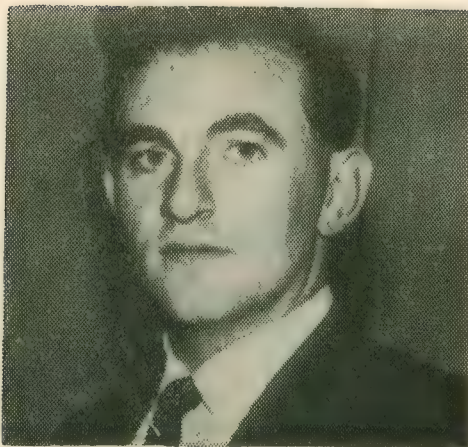
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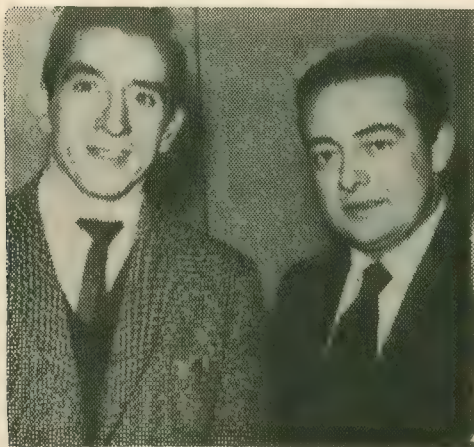
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La Traviata

ACT I.

THERE is a very gay party at the home of Violetta Valery, a delightful young lady of somewhat questionable reputation. She is introduced to an attractive young country fellow, Alfredo Germont, who displays his excellent tenor voice in the Brindisi, or drinking song

When the guests go into the next room to dance, Violetta is about to follow when she is overcome by a fit of coughing; she remains behind and relaxes on a couch to recover. Alfredo takes this opportunity to profess his love for her. Violetta is at first embarrassed by his attentions, and tells him he had better forget her, but realising how serious he is, and how long he has been in love with her, she promises to meet him the following day.

It is now late, the guests take their leave, and Violetta is left alone for her great scene. In the aria *Ab fors' e' lui*, she wonders whether this serious young man could be the one true love of her life. "Nonsense!" she cries, hers must be a free life, and puts her heart into *Sempre Libera*. As the act ends we know that, despite her protests, she has fallen in love.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

Three months have passed since the night of the party, and we find Alfredo and Violetta in a country house outside Paris. Alfredo enters, and sings of his joy in being with Violetta *De mien bollenti spiriti* ("Wild my dream of ecstasy"). From Annina, Violetta's maid, he learns that the expense of keeping the country house has far exceeded what Violetta told him, and in order to meet the costs, she has been selling her jewels. He immediately leaves for Paris in the hope of raising money to reimburse her.

After he has gone, Violetta receives an unexpected visit from Alfredo's father. She is

filled with apprehension, and knows the dreaded separation from the man she loves is drawing near. The elder Germont pleads with her to give up her relationship with Alfredo on the grounds that the scandal will ruin his career. He also begs that she should consider his daughter. *Pura siccome un angelo*, sings Germont, in the familiar air. Should the liason continue, her forthcoming marriage will be threatened.

Violetta agrees to give up Alfredo and not to tell him why. She writes a farewell note, and also accepts an invitation to a party. Alfredo returns, she begs him to love her and then leaves. Then Alfredo reads her note, but before he can follow her, his father appears, and in his great aria *Di Provenza*, begs his son to return home. Alfredo's answer is to find the invitation to the party and dash off to avenge an imaginary insult.

SCENE II.

We are at a party in Flora's house. Alfredo is there, and soon Violetta arrives with Baron Douphol. He and Alfredo take an instant dislike to each other and begin to gamble. Violetta fears trouble and asks Alfredo to leave. Because of her promise to old Germont, she tells him she loves the Baron. He denounces her before the company, and the scene ends as the Baron challenges Alfredo to a duel.

ACT III

Violetta is dying in a shabby flat in Paris. She reads a letter from the elder Germont telling her Alfredo wounded the Baron and has left the country. Alfredo now knew of her sacrifice and would come to her.

Alfredo rushes in, they sing their touching duet, *Parigi, o cara*, and plan to leave the city for a time. Violetta imagines herself better, but at last, death wins, and she falls back into her remorseful lover's arms.

—P.C.

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SYNOPSIS OF SCENES :

The action takes place in Paris and its environs. Period, about 1700

ACT 1. Drawingroom in Violetta's House.

ACT 2. Scene 1—A Room in Violetta's Country House.
Scene 2—Apartment in Flora's Mansion.

ACT 3. Violetta's Bedroom.

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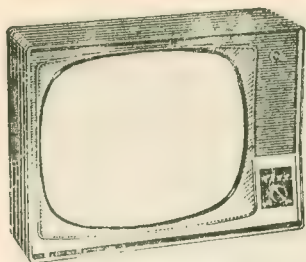
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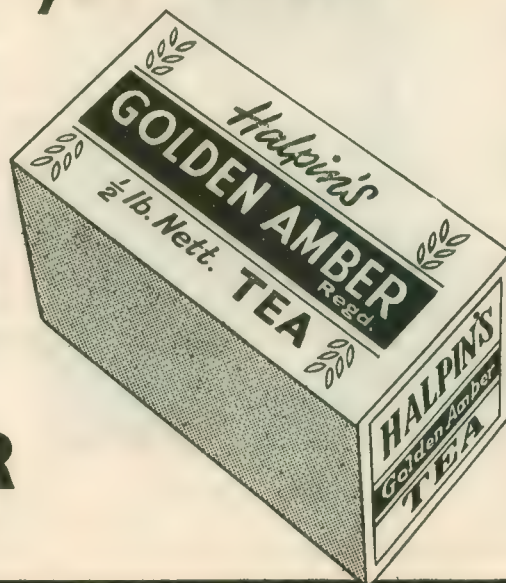
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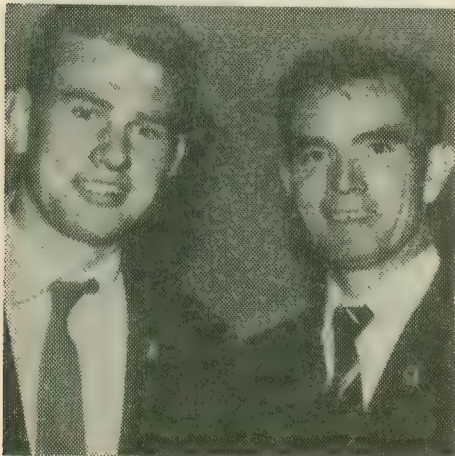
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OUR GUEST ARTISTES

EDWARD BYLES, fresh from his triumphs in the Sadlers Wells and Welsh National Opera Co. productions of "Murder in the Cathedral," "I Masuadieri" and "William Tell," returns to Limerick to sing his favourite role of Rudolph in "La Boheme." Noted for his thrilling voice, this young Welsh tenor has made guest appearances with the Covent Garden Opera, in Holland, and with the Dublin Grand Opera Society. He was a member of the Glyndebourne Festival Opera for many seasons, and has been featured in Radio and Television opera on numerous occasions.

CONNELL BYRNE was born in Sydney, Australia, in December 1928 and sang leading tenor roles at the Sydney Conservatorium and with the Rockdale Opera before going to England in 1957 to study under Dino Borgioli. In 1958 he sang with the Ingestre Opera and at Sadlers Wells, and in the same year went to Milan to study with Maestri Pessina and Demori of La Scala. He appeared in "Lucia di Lammermoor" in Monga, and "La Traviata" at San Pellegrino. He joined the Glyndebourne Opera in 1961, and on his first visit to Limerick will sing Alfredo in "La Traviata."

DAVID HOLMAN, the Canadian tenor, will sing the role of Count Almaviva in "The Barber of Seville." He was already well known for his lyric tenor voice and had wide experience throughout Canada when he arrived in England to sing with the Ingestre Festival Opera. Since then he has appeared with the Aldeburgh Festival Opera, Hintlesham Festival Opera, and for three years with the Glyndebourne Festival Opera. He broadcasts frequently for the B.B.C. and Radio Eireann, and his Television appearances include "Pagliacci" and "Music for You."

EDVINA GRAY, returning to Limerick for the third consecutive year will sing Mimi in "La Boheme" and will be remembered for her previous successes in "Lucia di Lammermoor" and "Faust." Trained in Milan, she subsequently sang leading roles in opera houses throughout Italy, including Rome, Milan, Bologna, Palma and the Reggio Emilia. She has also appeared in Berne and with the Carl Rosa Opera Co. in England, and broadcasts frequently over the Swiss and Italian radio networks, as well as the B.B.C.

ELIZABETH RUST, the distinguished Australian soprano, whose singing in "The Bohemian Girl" last spring created such a favourable impression, will sing the difficult role of Violetta in "La Traviata"—her favourite role, in which she recently won acclaim with the Welsh National Opera Co. Born in Sydney, she studied singing with Elizabeth Forini of the Vienna State Opera, and at the National School of Opera in London. She has appeared in leading roles with the Glyndebourne Festival Opera, the Hintlesham Festival, the Welsh National Opera Co and the Dublin Grand Opera Society.

EDNA GRAHAM, the brilliant New Zealand soprano, will sing Rosina in "The Barber of Seville" and Musetta in "La Boheme." Born in Christchurch, New Zealand, she became a frequent broadcaster while still in her teens and won a scholarship to study at the London Royal Academy of Music for four years. On leaving the Academy, she joined the Carl Rosa Opera Co. as principal soprano and since then has appeared as guest principal at Glyndebourne, Sadlers Wells, the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden and the Norske Opera. With a voice of extensive range, she sings fluently in several languages.

WILLIAM DICKIE, well known to Limerick audiences for his magnificent performances in "Rigoletto" last season, and in "La Traviata" and "The Lily of Killarney" three years ago, makes a welcome re-appearance to sing Figaro in "The Barber of Seville," and Germont in "La Traviata." The Covent Garden baritone studied under Professor Stefan Pohlmann of Vienna and with Tito Ruffo in Italy, and has sung leading roles in many Italian opera houses, in Vienna State Opera and the Krefeld Opera. He has also made complete recordings of "Rigoletto" and "La Traviata" in La Scala, Milan for Columbia.

STANISLAV PIECZORA, the famous Polish bass, whose performance as Mephistopheles was one of the highlights of last year's Limerick season, has been engaged to sing Don Basilio in "The Barber of Seville" and Colline in "La Boheme." After training in Italy, he made his debut in the Warsaw Grand Theatre. He practised as a doctor in London and made numerous appearances in televised opera before joining the Carl Rosa Opera Co. A regular broadcaster, he has given many performances with the Sadlers Wells Opera and was principal bass with the Royal Nederlandsche Opera in Amsterdam.

RUSSELL SMITH comes from Melbourne, Australia, where he made many broadcasts with the Australian Broadcasting Commission. In 1959 he sang the principal baritone roles in two American operas at the Royal Court Theatre, and in that year won a scholarship to the Guildhall School of Music in London. Since then he has sung many operatic roles and appeared at Sadlers Wells. Last year he was a soloist in the Sir Henry Wood Memorial Concert at the Royal Albert Hall. He will sing the part of Dr. Bartolo in "The Barber of Seville" and "Schaunard" in "La Boheme."

The Festival Operas

For their fortnight's Festival of Grand Opera, the Limerick Choral and Operatic Society have chosen three of the most popular works ever written. One of these, *La Boheme*, is having its Irish amateur premier.

The three operas, *Boheme*, *La Traviata*, and *The Barber of Seville*, beloved of millions of music lovers, have been chosen not alone on account of their popularity, but because of the wonderful contrast in moods they offer. Much has been said and written about them, but perhaps the most interesting fact is that all three had absolutely disastrous first performances.

La Traviata, by Guiseppe Verdi, was first performed in Venice on March 6th, 1853. Neither the critics nor the public liked it. The public could not accept the fact that it was played in modern dress and the critics thought the story "foul, hideous and immoral." Later, however, the public liked it, and to-day it is one of the most popular of all operas.

The story is based on a play by the younger Alexandre Dumas entitled *Le dame aux camelias*, which is faintly autobiographical. Even to-day, tourists visit the grave of Marie Duplessie, the original traviata (misguided one), which is in the cemetery of Montmartre. She died on February 2nd, 1846, aged 22. In addition to Dumas, she numbered Franz Liszt among her conquests.

La Boheme, by Giacomo Puccini, was given its world premier on February 1st, 1896, in the Opera House at Turin. A young Toscanini was the conductor. Puccini was already famous with Manon Lescaut, and the evening had all the ingredients of a triumph. Nothing like that happened, the public were cool and the critics divided. One wrote of the wonderful work as "empty and downright infantile." How wrong they all were !

The score of the libretto was the autobiographical *Scenes de la vie de Boheme*, by Henri Munger. He was Rudolfo, and was in his young days an unsuccessful writer, sharing his room with a fellow Bohemian. His "Mimi" was a girl named Lucile, who died of consumption, not in the attic but in hospital. Marcello was a composite of two artist friends of Munger—Lazare and Tabar, while Colline was modelled on a writer named Jean Wallon. Schaunard's real name was Alexandre Schanne, painter-writer-musician. Musetta's real life counterpart was a model who was drowned in the Mediterranean. The address of the Cafe Momus was 15 Rue des Pretres St. Germain l'Auxerrois.

The Barber of Seville had a really stormy first night on February 20th, 1816, in Rome. Rossini was unfortunate in that a Barber of Seville had been written by the then popular composer Giovanni Paisiello, whose followers created such a din at the premiere of Rossini's work that they ruined it. After that terrible start, it took many years for Rossini's Barber to become popular. Eventually, however, the public grew to love the great musical humour of the great work and have enshrined it among the evergreen favourites.

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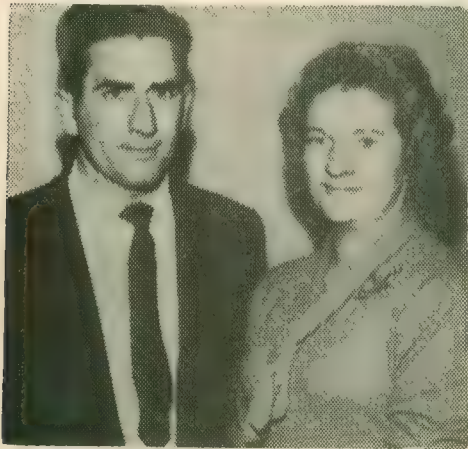
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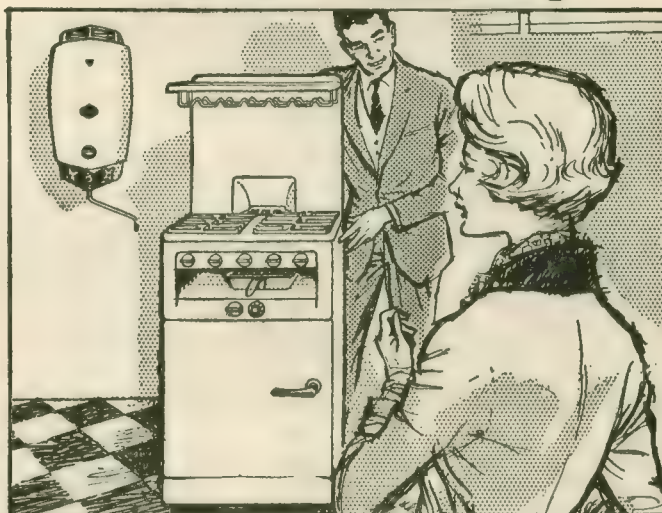
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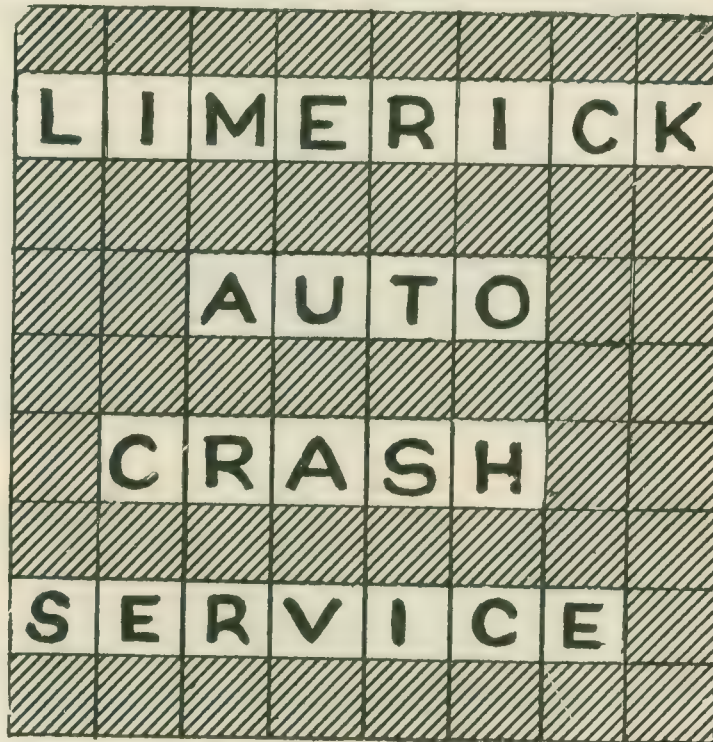
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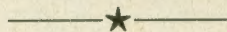
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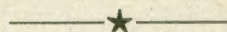
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